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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

a
Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

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No. 1032. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1888.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

Author of "A Dateless Bargain," etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

"How I'm to get into it, my dear, I don't know," said Lady Judith to Madge, as together they inspected an elaborate arrangement of crimson satin and lace sent down by her London milliner. "They've absolutely squeezed me into a yard at the waist, as if I were trying to make myself into a girl in her teens, when they know perfectly well that I've been a yard and an inch for the past fifteen years!"

It was the morning of Sir Peter's birthday; bells were ringing from Saint Cuthbert's old tower; the district generally had broken out into flags, triumphal arches, best clothes, and a whole holiday. A delightful air of liveliness and bustle pervaded the Castle; guests were arriving by every train, the well-trained servants went about with a more animated tread, as if their minutes were of value to them. As for Sir Peter, rosy and radiant, he was here, there, everywhere, now at the front of the house, now at the back; yet, strange to say, whenever he was wanted he was nowhere to be found. Servants seemed to be perpetually running after him—in at doors, out at windows—his movements being so rapid that it was rather a difficult matter to overtake them.

"If he'd only keep in one room for half-an-hour we should all know what we're about," sighed Lady Judith, when she had finished her lament over her dress.

"Madge, is it going to rain, do you think?" said Sir Peter, at that moment

putting his head inside the dressing-room door.

"Good gracious! You were in the garden half-a-minute ago. I saw you myself superintending the rolling of the gravel paths, or the lawn-mowing, or perhaps it was the stoning of the flower-beds!" cried Lady Judith sarcastically.

The weather appeared to be very much on Sir Peter's mind that day. It was among the few things utterly beyond his superintendence, and he was proportionately anxious on the matter.

"Uncle Peter, Uncle Peter," sounded Lance's voice at that moment outside the door. "Are you anywhere to be found? You are as difficult to catch as the fluff off a dandelion; I've sent half-a-dozen servants hunting all over the grounds for you, and now I hear your voice up here!"

"Wanted again! Another deputation?" said Sir Peter gleefully. "Dear me, dear me! What with one thing and another, I shall be worn to fiddle-strings before the day's over! The end of it will be I shall have to give up keeping my birthdays, they'll be too much for me—eh, Madge?"

Give up keeping his birthday! There was but little fear of Sir Peter doing that till he gave up himself and went into his grave.

Madge had come downstairs in the morning with such a white, tired look on her face that every one had overwhelmed her with enquiries as to headache, neuralgia, or such possible ailments. Later on in the day, however, as the demands on her time increased with the arrival of the guests, her cheeks grew so flushed and her eyes so bright, that people altered their minds and complimented her on her good looks.

Between thirty and forty of the invited guests were to be accommodated at the

Castle on a two or three days' visit. Lady Brabazon and other near neighbours had filled their houses in anticipation of the yearly festivity. The inn at Lower Upton had been hired from top to bottom by Sir Peter, and special trains were to run throughout the night from Carstairs for late arriving or early departing guests.

Young Mrs. Cohen was always greatly in request at this annual festivity. Naturally enough she was looked upon as Lady Judith's representative, and as it was a much less-fatiguing matter to carry on conversation with her than with the elder lady, she frequently found herself overburthened with confidences intended for Lady Judith's ear.

Even Miss Shore followed suit in this matter.

"Will you tell Lady Judith how grateful I am to her for her handsome present," said that young lady's voice suddenly over Madge's shoulder. "I never can make her understand me—she asks me always 'Are you Scotch or Welsh?'"

Madge was having a brief five minutes' rest in the library, where she knew she would be within call if wanted, and where was her only chance of quiet if such were to be had that day.

She started at the sound of Miss Shore's voice, shrinking from the young girl as heretofore Miss Shore had shrunk from her.

Miss Shore repeated her request:

"Will you thank Lady Judith for the beautiful dress she sent me yesterday by her maid, and for the help she allowed her maid to give me in arranging it?"

Madge immediately guessed the truth of the matter, and giving honour to whom honour was due, saw Sir Peter's ministering hand alike in the manner as in the matter of the gift.

"It is Sir Peter who should be thanked, I think," she said, coldly.

A sudden idea occurred to her.

"Now that I have the opportunity of asking, will you tell me how much I am in your debt for the picture you have been good enough to paint?" she asked, a little formally.

Miss Shore coloured slightly.

"The pictures are not finished; one is only half done," she answered.

"If you do not mind, I would like to pay for the one that is finished—for the two if you like. It makes no difference to me."

Again Miss Shore flushed. Madge, in

her own mind, could not help contrasting this with a former conversation she had had with this young lady on the subject of pictures. Then she had been warmth, and Miss Shore had been ice. Now, the cases seemed reversed.

"It is as you like," she began, hesitatingly.

"Twenty, thirty, forty pounds?" queried Madge:

"Oh no, no," exclaimed the girl. "I could not—would not—"

"I dare say you will like it in gold?" interrupted Madge. "I haven't so much loose money now. I will ask Sir Peter to lend me some. Wait here, please, till I return."

But to find Sir Peter was a thing not easy to accomplish, although not a minute before he had put his head inside the door, and had told her that, "The wind was getting round to the south-west." Madge, however, appeared to have strong reasons for wishing to discharge her debt. She hunted high, and she hunted low, and eventually lighted upon Mr. Stubbs, who, it may be inferred, from the ready manner with which he supplied her with gold, had already changed her cheque for a hundred pounds.

Miss Shore was not alone when Madge returned to the library. A screen shut the door off from the rest of the room. As she entered behind this screen, Madge heard her voice concluding a sentence:

"I will thank Heaven when the evening is ended!"

To which Lance's voice replied laughingly:

"Have you been looking at the stars again? I would like to tell them to mind their own business, and not trouble themselves with our affairs. But it's the beginning, not the end, of the evening I want to talk about—the first valse, don't forget—you've promised to give it me."

The last sentence was said, not whispered, as Madge crossed the room towards them.

"Miss Shore believes in the ruling of the planets, Madge, in these days of steam-engines and electric-lighting! Can such a thing be credited?"

Madge did not reply. Instead, she began counting her sovereigns on a table in front of Miss Shore.

"Ten, twenty, twenty-five," she said.

Miss Shore laid her hands over the gold. They were trembling; her face was flushing; her eyes seemed—could it be possible?—awimming.

"No, I will only take ten. I would not take that, only——" she broke off abruptly.

"I do believe the older one gets, the younger one feels," said Sir Peter's voice, gradually approaching from behind the screen. "Now, isn't this sweet—isn't this touching, I ask you—'Presented, by the children of the infant-school of Saint Cuthbert's, to Sir Peter Critchett, as an expression of their love and duty.' That's what the label attached says. Now, I ask you all, isn't it worth being sixty-three years of age to receive such a tribute as this?"

He stood in the middle of the room with an enormous nosegay in his hand. It was entirely composed of cottage-garden flowers, such as orange-lilies, columbines, marigolds, and in size was about the circumference of a small umbrella.

He had evidently been repeatedly enjoying the fragrance of the flowers, for a portion of the pollen of the lilies was transferred to the tip of his nose.

Sir Peter could scarcely have expected an affirmative answer to his question from any one of those three young people assembled there. He rarely, however, expected answers of any sort. He walked up and down the room about half-a-dozen times; asked Miss Shore a variety of questions concerning her sketches; catechised Lance as to the dancing capabilities of certain of the younger men who had arrived that morning; finally directed Madge's attention to the generally cloudy appearance of the heavens; and then vanished.

All this in about a minute and a half.

Madge recommenced counting her sovereigns.

Lance made an impatient movement, and walked away to the window.

Miss Shore stood for a moment looking from the gold to Madge's face, from Madge's face to the gold.

Madge grew restless under those furtive yet questioning glances.

"Shall I take this gold from you?" they seemed to ask. "Do you wish me well? Can I trust you?"

"There goes Lancelot Clive, but for the special interposition of Providence," said Lance suddenly, from the window recess where he stood looking out into the grounds.

Madge's eyes followed his and rested upon a groom coming up to the house in company with a gamekeeper.

"Where, who, which?" she asked, a little bewildered.

"Whichever of the two you like. Upon my life, Madge, if I were turned out into the world to-morrow to get my own living, I don't know how I should do it except by grooming or gamekeeping!" he answered as he left the room.

Could it have been the sight of Miss Shore being paid for her pictures that had aroused in him the thought that he had even less capacity for earning a decent livelihood than she; or had he been suddenly seized with an altogether inexplicable wish to be independent of Sir Peter's bounty and patronage?

But whatever might have given rise to the thought, Madge felt that there was no gainsaying the truth of it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"I FEEL like a camel threading a needle," said Lady Judith, in her voluminous crimson draperies, entering the drawing-room where Madge was already seated. "Madge, my dear, are you going to throw open your little sitting-room to-night? I suppose your wall decorations are finished by this time?"

Dinner—on this particular night a stupendous affair—was over; guests had retired to their rooms to put finishing touches to their ball toilettes. Lance and sundry other of the younger men lounged on the terrace outside in the soft early night, waiting for the dancing to begin. Sir Peter, as usual, was everywhere that he was not wanted to be, nowhere that he ought to have been. Madge and Lady Judith, ready to do the honours of the evening, were having a little chat together, or, in other words, Lady Judith was turning to the best account a quiet five minutes that gave her all to herself a silent if not an attentive listener.

Dancing was to be in the big inner hall, where "the eight-and-twenty Critchetts looked down," with glazed eyes and varnished smiles, on banks of exotics and ferns specially arranged to grace the evening's festivities.

Madge's octagon sitting-room was little more than a big recess opening off this hall. She replied, at the top of her voice, to Lady Judith's query, that, "when the hall grew unbearably hot she would throw open her boudoir for fans and flirtation."

Not a word did Lady Judith hear; she had fallen upon another subject now!

"Sir Peter tells me that Lance and he went to Claire's and ordered a smart ball-

dress for Miss Shore," she said, wielding with great energy a fan that might have suited Titanic fingers.

Madge had to unfold her own fan in self-defence, and hold it as a screen sideways to her forehead, for her curls were flying hither and thither in all directions.

"It seems to me a far-fetched idea," Lady Judith went on, "to expect the young lady to make her appearance at all to-night! But then every one knows that Sir Peter's ideas are——"

"Madge," said Sir Peter, at that moment appearing at one of the long French windows, "I don't believe it will rain after all! But will there be a moon to-night—that's what I want to know—is there an almanack anywhere handy?"

"Uncle Peter!" said Lance, appearing behind the old gentleman with the big nosegay of cottage flowers in his hand, "you've left your button-hole behind you!" Then he turned to Madge, "Isn't it time the fiddlers struck up! Lovely visions in clouds of tulle and lace are beginning to descend the stairs!"

Madge, on her way to the ball-room, stopped a moment to give an order to a servant. It was to see that the candelabra in her octagon boudoir were lighted, and that the curtains which overhung the doorway were kept closely drawn.

Sir Peter, as might have been expected, considered it incumbent on him to open the ball. He chose for his partner in the first quadrille a Dowager Countess, about half-a-dozen years younger than himself.

"Now," he said with a deprecating air, as he led the lady to her place at the top of the room, "I'm sure if the choice had been given us, you and I would much sooner have been in our beds than footing it here with the young people."

But to Madge he whispered in the course of "flirtation figure," it fell to his lot to guide her through the dance, "If the choice had been given to me I would have had you for a partner, my dear—and isn't the music horribly slow? I must speak to the bandmaster."

Lance and Madge were partners in this quadrille.

"A duty dance!" said Madge to herself bitterly, as she thought of dances in days gone by when his eyes had looked into hers through the tale of boyish first love.

"That'll be a match, not a doubt," she heard one elderly chaperon whisper to another. The whisper came inopportunist enough on the heels of her thought. She

glanced furtively with flushing cheeks at Lance, wondering if he had heard it. His face, however, told no tale save that of eager expectancy as, turned towards the door, it watched the stream of guests flow in.

That long, low-ceiled hall presented a gay pageant. "A wind-waved tulip bed" it seemed, brilliant with swaying colours under soft, bright light.

Madge, looking up and down the ranks of young happy faces there, thought that her own face must have shown strangely haggard and wan among them all, if one quarter of her thoughts were written upon it. But a casual glance into a mirror undeceived her, and she started back amazed at her own presentment.

It seemed as if for the evening a certain wild bizarre beauty had been granted to her. Her eyes were brilliant; her cheeks glowed; a reckless, defiant gaiety seemed to have taken possession of her. In her dress of pale green, all ablaze with rubies and diamonds, one might almost have fancied her

A cross between
A gipsy and a fairy queen,

who for the evening had condescended to quit the woodland and don ball-room attire. She danced, she talked, she laughed incessantly, till every one of her partners began to think that young Mrs. Cohen had suddenly developed into a most fascinating creature, and to speculate on his individual chance of winning her affections. But though Madge proved herself a very mistress of the fine art of ball-room fascination, it was her lips that did the work, not her eyes. They were fixed as steadfastly and expectantly on the door as Lance's were, though not with quite the same look in them.

The first valse, the second, the third, had been danced out by the swift young feet. The fourth had begun; Madge, in the midst of the swaying dancers, was saying to herself: "She will not come, she has changed her mind, and perhaps gone to bed," when suddenly she felt rather than saw a grey figure silently glide into the room. If her eyes had been shut she knew she would have felt that grey, cool presence—just as one standing in full sunlight with closed eyes is conscious of a cloud passing athwart the sun. In the brilliant moving through the shadowy grey draperies and the still, white face seemed to show like a patch of moonlight falling cool, clear, apart, into a heated, gas-lighted room.

"Who is that distinguished-looking young lady?" asked Madge's partner, a stalwart young fellow, who seemed to think that the whole art of dancing consisted in letting his partner's feet touch the ground as seldom as possible.

Madge did not answer—did not even hear the question.

"I am tired; I must sit down," she said abruptly. Her partner found a seat for her at once. She speedily, however, found another for herself, a low settee placed immediately beside the dark tapestry curtains which covered the entrance to her octagon boudoir.

There she leaned back against the cushions, watching the dancers as they whirled past—or, rather, watching one pair of dancers from out of the motley throng, for Miss Shore had no sooner entered the hall than Lance had claimed her for his partner, and together they floated along the soft stream of valse melody.

They made a distinguished and handsome couple. Nature had put some of her best workmanship into Lance—had not left him to be fashioned hap-hazard by any of her journeymen. Lithe, and full of grace, he guided his partner as only the lithe and graceful can through the crush of the dancers. The misty grey of the girl's filmy dress floated lightly around them like so much vaporous cloud, out of which looked their two faces—the man's with an unmistakeable look of admiration for his partner in his blue eyes—the woman's with a look of wild, mournful spirituality in her dark grey ones such as is rarely seen out of a picture.

"How cool and comfortable Miss Shore looks when every one else is so remarkably red in the face!" said Sir Peter, bustling up to Madge with a very red face himself, and his right-hand glove split up the back through the energy wherewith he had been shaking hands with every one. Then his voice changed to a confidential whisper. "Madge," he said, "I have just had a polka—a nice quick one—substituted for the lancers, you and I will dance it together, eh?"

Madge pleaded fatigue. Her last partner had danced on castors instead of feet, she said, and she had had to run after him all round the room at six-eight time.

Sir Peter opened his eyes very wide. "Tired! tired!" he repeated blankly. "Why, I've only just begun to feel alive, and to enter into the spirit of the thing!"

"The breeding of young ladies of the present generation is something to wonder at!" said Lady Judith, bearing down upon them at that moment, like a sou'-wester incarnate. "Miss Lottie Brabazon absolutely answers a remark I address to her on her fingers! On her fingers, my dear, if you'll believe such a thing, as if I were as deaf as a post! If young ladies were only taught to speak as I was taught when I was a girl—to take hold of their consonants properly, and to open their mouths wide enough to get their vowels out, their elders would have no difficulty in understanding them!"

All this with her fan going at double speed. She fanned Sir Peter away from Madge's side, as one might fan a moth from the wall, and then fanned him on a little farther into the ball-room, following him up with a string of vigorous questions as to whether another pair of gloves could not be found for him, was it not possible for him to renew his button-hole, and so forth.

But Madge had not heard a syllable of all this. Lance and Miss Shore were at that moment floating past, and their words, like so many sharp stabs, pierced her ear.

"You said this morning," said Lance's voice deep and clear below the waves of waltz melody, "'Would to Heaven to-night were over!' Do you say the same now?"

To which Miss Shore replied in soft, tremulous tones:

"I say now, would to Heaven this night could last for ever—this valse, at least, for anything more like heaven I never knew!"

Madge leaned back on her cushions, her breath coming in short, quick gasps. For a moment all was confusion to her. The room dissolved into a whirling chaos of colour, light, and tuneless music. She pressed her hand over her eyeballs. It was easy enough to shut out the zig-zagging light and colour, but not so easy to muffle the sound of that discordant, jarring waltz. On and on, on and on it seemed to beat against her very ears in hateful regular rise and fall. Would the feet of those dancers never tire? Had fate conspired with the infernal powers to render Miss Shore's wish a reality, and would this waltz go on aimlessly, endlessly, through eternity?

One after another the dancers yielded to fatigue and sat down, till Lance and Miss Shore had the floor to themselves.

Still the musicians played on. A fascinating sight some would have said, that

handsome man and beautiful young woman rivalling the waves of the sea in rhythm and grace of motion.

One there was leaning back on her cushions, who felt her eyeballs scorched by it, and if she had been called upon to describe an eleventh circle to Dante's *Inferno*, would have said, "Here it is;" for she could have pictured no worse form of torture than to behold eternally the sight which confronted her at that moment.

"It must be now or never, Mrs. Cohen," said Mr. Stubbs's voice suddenly, stealthily, right into her ear.

The music had ceased, and Lance was leading Miss Shore up the room, towards the settee on which Madge was seated.

Madge's eyes, in answer to his whisper, said: "Keep back! Don't dare to come near me to-night!"

Her lips said nothing. She rose from her seat, steadying herself with one hand against the arm of the settee; with her other hand she pulled the cord of the tapestry curtains, laying bare to view the cool, dark, little room, just as Lance and Miss Shore reached her side.

"Here is a tempting little nook!" she said, addressing the two. "What a glorious waltz you have had!"

A tempting little nook indeed it looked. The light from the brilliant hall caught the dark sheen of its polished oak floor, the bright sheen of its yellow silk walls. A large deep sofa and some luxurious low chairs showed in solid outline in the dimness.

"What a jolly room you've made of it!" said Lance, standing back in the doorway to allow the two ladies to pass in before him.

A long, narrow mirror nearly faced the door. On the wall immediately opposite to it hung a picture, lighted on either side by candelabra, and necessarily reflected in all its details in the mirror.

And this is what Miss Shore saw in that mirror, as she stood in the middle of the room, a little in advance of Madge:

A gaunt mountain, standing out in black outline against a stormily-purple sky, with a stone-built chalet in a bowery garden at its base. And high over the mountain there shone out one star of intense metallic brightness.

A BOOK OF THE CIRCUS.

CERTAINLY, you will go to the Paris Exhibition, 1889, although you may not approve the centenary chosen. I cannot

promise that you will see the top of the Eiffel tower—which is not a tower, but only a scaffolding—but you will see the basement and some of the superstructure; for, in case of a hitch in the upper storey they won't have time to grub it up.

You will indulge in a long day's miscellaneous sight-seeing, making good use of your eyes, improving your mind, and fatiguing your legs. After absorbing as much promiscuous information as you can take in at once, you will think of dinner, which you will have richly earned. Better is it not to restore your strength on the spot—lest the tower should take it, not into its head, for it won't have any, but into its body, to fall while you are in full enjoyment of your repast—but return to Paris, where you may dine well and reasonably, if you know where to go, or cheaply and badly, without taking any trouble.

Having accomplished your restauration, you are confronted by the difficulty: "What to do with the rest of the day?" It is too early to go to bed, unless you have been so foolish as to travel in an excursion train at reduced fares—a "train de plaisir," forsooth—all the previous night.

Somebody will suggest: "They are playing one of Racine's tragedies at the Théâtre Français, with stars in all the characters; or you may prefer a most interesting sensational spectacular drama, with gorgeous scenery, costumes, and the rest, at the Porte Saint Martin. At the Gymnase, Alexandre Dumas the Younger is working out one of his social and moral problems by an illustration embodied in dramatic form."

But, with your intellect already overworked, will you care to listen to unfamiliar verse and lofty phrases in a foreign language? to follow the incidents of a complicated plot, or to weigh the value of arguments whose soundness you more than doubt? No, after your hard day's exhibiting, that would be anything but a relief.

A book which has just come out* gives me the hint to send you to the circus. At eight, to a minute, the performance begins; at ten, to a second, all is over. In five minutes, or less, the building is cleared of the last spectator, so ready and convenient are the means of exit. Thence, you can betake yourself straight to your

* "Le Cirque, à Pied et à Cheval," par A. J. Dalsème, Paris; à La Librairie Illustrée, 7, Rue du Croissant.

rest—unless the once more hungry stomach begs for a little bit of supper first.

M. Dalkème's enthusiastic reasons for patronising "Le Cirque" are stronger than any that I can urge. The deuce take the theatres, he says, with their long-winded speeches, their wooden landscapes, their wearisome rigmaroles, where half a pint of pison, as Ducrow used to say, is diluted to fill out five long acts. Away with the stage, the footlights, and the prompter. Words! words! nothing but words! As if gesture and action were worthless superfluities, although they have the inappreciable advantage of being understood throughout every latitude and degree of sublunary intellect. If you want a true volapuk, there it is, giving you no trouble to follow the dialogue, and setting up no pretensions to correct people's morals.

Balzac was never tired of admiring a skilled lady horse-rider's agility and grace. He thought the "écuyère," in the plenitude of her powers, superior to all the glories of song, dance, or dramatic art, whether exhibited by Taglioni, Rachel, or Cinti-Damoreau—especially as, every time she wins applause, she runs the risk of breaking her neck.

But the signification of an equestrian scene is only another phase of theatrical convention, which varies according to circumstances. For a circus is a theatre whose stage is in the middle, with the audience all round it.

The young lady gambolling on the flat white saddle, or on the horse's bare back, is no more her actual self than Patti is in the *Bride of Lammermoor*, or Sarah Bernhardt in *La Tosca*. Coquetry, love, terror, madness, are interpreted by the gestures and the eyes. Leander will express his soft, "I love you," by outstretched arms, instead of by word of mouth; Don Juan will not be the less seductive because he practises his wicked arts at a canter. The horse, however, will claim his share of the triumph, which he knows to be his, by right.

And now, exactly as, to eat stewed hare, you must first of all procure a hare, so, to exhibit feats of horsemanship, you must begin by constructing a circus. And equestrian architecture is guided by principles which deserve to be codified.

You take, and leave unoccupied, a flat surface of ground having a diameter of exactly thirteen mètres, or forty-two feet, six-tenths and four-hundredths of a foot English, the regulation size of the arena,

which must never be departed from—not thirteen mètres three-quarters, nor twelve mètres and a half, but thirteen mètres, rigorously to a centimètre. In this case, at least, the number thirteen is not unlucky, but just the contrary.

The fixed dimensions of the arena comply with a twofold exigence—the requirements of the man and the habits of the animal. Both are inveterate wanderers from town to town. Wherever they go, they carry with them an absolute identity of movement, which secures for an exercise its mathematical and mechanical precision. Neither the horse, nor probably his riders, know centripetal and centrifugal forces, even by name; but practice enables them to measure those forces accurately and to keep them in exact equilibrium with their speed.

In circuses of invariable dimensions, the artists, biped and quadruped, are everywhere at home. On the same identical extent of sand or sawdust, a false movement is never made by experienced performers. The horse knows his business and fulfils it without hesitation; he is not put out by having to act his part under unaccustomed conditions. And he is proud of having acted it well. There are horses who take all the applause for themselves, and want to treat the public to an encore before it is asked for. The rider may urge them to make their exit; they will strive to linger before their admirers a little longer.

For the circus develops a horse's intellectual capabilities, besides improving his behaviour and manners. Why should speed be the only quality aimed at by those who profess to improve the breed? The Circus is not inferior to the Turf in its aims, certainly not in its practices.

The director of a circus, according to the Dutchman Carré, ought himself to educate his horses—for every horse is teachable—and allow nobody else to present his trained steeds before the public. It seems, indeed, no easy task to take an uncouth rustic quadruped and convert him into a polished dandy; yet Charles Francini showed its possibility with Regent. Good sense and patience are the passwords to success. If gentleness fails, it will be time enough to have recourse to rigour. But be careful to let no needless severity exasperate the animal's innate sense of justice.

A first-rate French horseman, the Com-mandant Lunel, invented in the Crimea an

instantaneous method of breaking horses. He bought them by troops, mostly in an all but wild condition. The necessity of rendering them serviceable at once brought about the adoption of a "hippo-lasso," a complication of straps and thongs, in which the rebellious subject was suddenly entangled and held as fast as if in a vice, paralysed, subdued without escape.

In the circus, instantaneousness would serve for nothing. The horse is a disciple who must be taught his a, b, c, letter by letter, slowly, deliberately, methodically. To restrain him, there is the tether; to excite him, the "chambrière," or long circus-whip; to direct him, the spoken word.

It took Louis Fernando not less than a whole year to accomplish the reputed impossible task of taming and mastering Barbare, a furious mare whom no one could approach without fear and trembling. Her owner, giving up the hope of doing anything with her, was about to send her to the knacker's.

"A good-for-nothing brute," he said, "who will neither submit to be mounted nor harnessed."

"Very well," Fernando answered; "you will see. One of these days, we shall make her perform at liberty."

And this mare, nervous up to epilepsy, impressionable up to madness, whom ten men could not hold from striding over the circus boundary, and dancing on the velvet seats—this savage beast, with haggard eyes and fiery nostrils, became little by little the obedient slave of her master's slightest signal or movement.

The above-named French officer had a companion brute to Barbare in Mercure, a Norman horse, whose sole accomplishments were biting, kicking, and rearing. He never went out of the barrack-yard, where the only work he did was to drag a water-cart.

In a few months, Mercure acquired the docility and cleverness displayed by horses of the "haute école," polkaing and waltzing in perfect time, executing ten galloping movements within the length of a yard, running round the Champ de Mars in less than six minutes, and beating the best trotters of the Bois de Boulogne. Neither prancing, pawing the ground, pirouetting, nor the Spanish step, had any mysteries for him. He would fetch a handkerchief, or point out accurately the loveliest young woman in the audience.

This transformation was fortunate for

him, because it secured him ease and independence in his declining years.

When he attained the age of retiring from business, M. Lunel took him to a neighbouring fair to sell him. A few purchasers looked at him; one of them made an offer.

"Very good," said the vendor; "but how do you mean to employ this horse?"

"Ma foi! he will drag one of my luggage-carts."

"Mercure drag a luggage-cart! Never! But who are you to venture such a proposal?"

"I am Bazola, the circus manager."

"A manager with only half an eye. You have a prize within reach, and can't stretch out your hand to grasp it!"

"A real prize? Where? How? What do you mean?"

Whereupon, the professor of horse-breaking gave a description of his pupil's talents—during which, Bazola's eyes opened wider and wider.

"I take the animal," he said at last. "He shall perform in my circus."

"But not too long at a time."

"Nevertheless, when I have paid for him——"

"You shall not pay for him. I give him to you, gratis—on two conditions: first, that you shall feed him well; secondly, that he shall never be overworked."

"Done! A bargain; and thank you very much."

Lunel superintended in person the débuts of the new performer, which proved a great success.

A few months afterwards, Bazola and his troop rang at the gate of the Château de Chagny, where Lunel resided.

"Ah, monsieur, how kind you have been! What a lucky find!"

"Mercure, you mean?"

"Certainly, monsieur. Make your mind easy. There is no stint about his oats. And as to fatigue, only look here," pointing to a big covered waggon, painted red and relieved with gold.

"What may that be?"

"Mercure's conveyance, built expressly for him—my breadwinner, you understand. Naturally, I take the greatest care of him. He never travels on foot nor performs half-an-hour per day."

Thus, instead of dragging a luggage-cart, Mercure rode in his carriage. Never did horse receive such honours since Caligula made his horse a Consul.

In circus life, though falls must be

reckoned with, it is still possible to alight at least upon one leg. Witness the history of Eveline Pernod.

On one of the grand boulevards in Paris, is a café described as "palatial." Even its counter, splendid with carved wood, brass chasings, and twining arabesques, looks as if it were a monarch's seat. The illusion would be complete if every counter were occupied like that where Eveline reigned a few years ago.

She was a Queen after her fashion—Queen by beauty and distinction. In spite of her surroundings of grog and beer glasses, you would have taken her for a lovely Peri. Whether replenishing her crystal flacons, or arranging symmetrical sugar on silver salvers, or bending over her books to enter her receipts, she was the cynosure of every eye.

With strict impartiality, she bestowed the same amenities on all her admirers, making an equitable distribution of her smiles. No one would ever have been able to boast of obtaining any preference, had not her eye occasionally wandered, with a complaisance which in the end excited jealousies, in the direction of the table at which was seated, morning and evening, Monsieur Félicien R. For Félicien R. was not like other suitors; his intentions aimed at more than a fugitive attachment. There are symptoms respecting which a woman is never mistaken. Eveline divined a serious inclination from the moment when, for the first time, after paying his account, he took leave, his voice slightly trembling with emotion, with the words: "Mademoiselle, I have the honour to lay my homage at your feet."

Afterwards, he daily occupied the place nearest to the lovely cashier. In sunlight, by gaslight, in summer, and winter, he completed his payments with the invariable formula, "Mademoiselle, I have the honour to lay my homage at your feet."

Félicien R.'s methodic regularity seemed as if it were the accomplishment of an imperative duty. The truth is, that he was a bureaucrat, as much through instinct as by profession. Gifted with solid qualities, he held an enviable place in an important office. His seriousness was not incompatible with mirth, at the same time that his manners became the dignity of a "Chef de Bureau" whose gray hairs would show themselves before very long.

Such a personage was not displeasing to Eveline. Félicien perceived it, and was

thereby emboldened to exchange a few remarks about this or that; but their conversations always ended by the presentation of his respectful homage.

Evidently, Monsieur R., in spite of his experience, was only a superficial observer; otherwise, he would have remarked the blush which overspread Mademoiselle Pernod's cheeks every time that he complimented her with the same parting salute.

Such a persistent continuance of devotion implied something more than civility. It betrayed a warmer sentiment. Eveline blushed more and more deeply. Félicien attributed her blushes to satisfaction, for decidedly she did not repel his assiduities. On the contrary, they appeared to him to be so welcome, that he ventured to open his usual phrase with "Dear Mademoiselle Eveline——"

Months passed in this way; but at last he was obliged to summon up courage and conquer his natural timidity. As the fair cashier was an orphan, he could not address himself to her parents, but had to ask her hand of her own proper self. For that grave step, he awaited one day till the very last customer had departed.

That evening, Mademoiselle Eveline's lips wore a radiant smile, her cheeks were brilliant scarlet. She sat restless on her throne, rose, sat down again, and then, with a presentiment of what was coming, stepped forward.

It was the first time Félicien had seen her descend from her platform. It was consequently the first time he could understand why she blushed every time he took his leave. The feet, before which such frequent homage had been laid, were reduced to one. The poor demoiselle de comptoir had a wooden leg.

A wooden leg? Well, yes! And she made no attempt to hide it. The moment was too decisive. She thought it honest, before allowing him to compromise himself, to show herself as she really was. The defect had been caused by a fall in a circus, where she had been one of the boldest riders—a frightful fall, necessitating amputation.

Félicien now knew all. Should he persevere in his offer of marriage? The decision was left to his unfettered choice. He did decide, with the loyalty of a gallant man and the delicacy of an upright conscience.

Eveline appeared to him dearer than ever. If she had only one foot, it was a

model of beauty. The Chef de Bureau, therefore, would not retract. He made her happy, and was happy himself. Eveline is a pattern for wives. Félicien adores her as when he first saw her. Only he has modified his profession of faith. He now and then murmurs: "My dear Madame R., allow me to lay my homage at your foot."

MORE ABOUT RATS.

THE rat has a great many peculiarities, and stories without end are told of his cunning and cuteness; of his penetration and forecast; of his gratitude and kindness. We will dwell, first, on his migratory habits.

Thirty years ago the writer resided in the Weald of Kent. His house stood back from the road with a considerable breadth of lawn and garden in front. Nearly opposite, but standing a good deal further back, were the house and buildings of a great farm. Whoever knew a farmyard without rats? This one was no exception to the rule. But, sometimes, food ran short there, or the rat fraternity required a change of scene and provisions. So they used to make their way over a large arable field, across the turnpike road (there were turnpikes then), and entering a ditch they found their way up to a pond near the back of the writer's house, around which were piggeries, cow-house, stable, hen-house, etc., and out of which, or rather into which, a drain ran from the dairy. These unwelcome visitors were rather partial to the dairy; for the cream on old Smoky's milk was some of the best, Smoky being very much of an Alderney in breed. Sometimes we had a hunt, but the rats had the best of it when they got into the long drains. Once, I remember, a big patriarchal rat got into the meadow ditch, and then turned back into a short drain, out of which he could not come. At last a ferret got hold of him, but had no room to turn to come out; so the writer's arm was stripped, and very soon ferret and rat were brought out, and the rat's peregrinations were at an end.

Not far from the Didcot Station, on the Great Western Railway, are some bleak, almost treeless downs, dotted here and there with a farm-house or farm-buildings. Rats have been seen by shepherds in the early morning, marching in long lines from one set of buildings to another. The corn having been thrashed in one place, they

were marching off to another, as if guided by unerring instinct. A medical gentleman, who lived in the neighbourhood of these downs, relates that, on one occasion, preparations had been made to ferret out and destroy all the rats in a certain barn. The day was fixed and the morning came, the company assembled; men with big sticks, ferrets, dogs, and all; but, strange to say, not a rat was to be found. The ferrets poked in and out of the holes, the dogs routed in the straw, and the men brandished their sticks, but all in vain; not a single rat made his appearance; they were all gone. The migration of the rats was either a mere coincidence, or else some of the wiseacres among them had noticed the preparations and guessed at their purpose, and had communicated the intelligence to the rat community, and so they evacuated the fortress before the storming party were ready for the attack. The gentleman afterwards ascertained that a labourer had met, early in the morning of the day when the hunt was to take place, a whole regiment of rats, marching along the bottom from the vacated barn to another some distance away. In confirmation of these migratory habits of the rat, it may be added that a gentleman, driving in a gig one summer morning about three o'clock, met, on the bridge of Kingston-upon-Thames, a large number of rats on the march. He pulled up, and the rats, without apparently taking any notice of him or his gig, filed off right and left, and pur sued their journey uninterruptedly.

Rats are very accommodating as to their food. Though they always wash after eating, and contrive to keep their persons clean, however dirty or even filthy may be the ways they travel, they are by no means particular as to their diet. Their taste ranges from the nicest dainties to the veriest garbage. The neighbourhood of slaughter-houses, candle factories, and other places where butcher's offal and other animal refuse would otherwise gather and breed fever, are kept clear of infection by the consumption of the disgusting remains by the numerous rats which harbour around. So that, in reality, they act as scavengers, and are helpful in the matter of the public health. But they do like nice bits, and are even fond of their drops. I have heard of the bones of rats being found in cider barrels when the liquor has been drawn off, but I do not remember to have seen them. But the thing is quite possible, and even likely, as the newly-

filled tubs are left open at the bung-hole for a time that fermentation may be fairly set up. It would benefit, rather than injure the cider—if you only did not know it—for it used to be common to put maize, malt, hops, raisins, or even beef, for the cider to “feed on;” and anything of the kind would soften it.

The tail of a rat comprises a larger number of bones and muscles than does the hand of a man, and while it is very useful to help the creature to spring and climb, it is brought into requisition sometimes to extract wine from bottles, which may have been left uncorked. In this way they sometimes take “more than is good for them.”

There is a story of an old lady who lived in a town in the south-west of England. She was noted for her home-made wine. A cask had been recently made and placed on a shelf in her cellar. A night or two after she was horribly frightened by strange noises proceeding from that apartment. The household was called up, the house was searched, but nothing could be found to account for the disturbance. The next night, as soon as the lights were out and the place was quiet, the dreadful noises were repeated, only with more alarming circumstances. There were sounds of squeaking, crying, knocking, scratching, and of feet pattering about, and they continued the whole of the night. The old lady lay in bed with her candle burning, pale and sleepless with alarm; now muttering her prayers, and then half determined to fire off the rusty old blunderbuss that hung over the chimney-piece. At length the morning broke, and the cock crew, when ghosts of all kinds find it convenient to disappear. To the old lady's intense relief, the noises ceased, and she solaced herself with sleep. The next night great preparations were made. Farm-servants, armed with pitchforks, slept in the house; the maids took the dinner-bell and the tinder-box into their room; and the big dog was tied to the hall-table. Night came, and the old lady retired to her room with some loaded horse-pistols for company. Instead of going to bed, she sat in her arm-chair by the fire, listening for the expected and dreaded sounds. But all was silent. Not a sound was heard all night, save the snoring of the serving-men, and the rattling of the dog's chain. The precautions had succeeded; the ghosts were vanquished. At least, so she thought. In the course of a few weeks

the scare passed away, and the whole thing was well-nigh forgotten. One evening, however, when the old lady was entertaining a party of friends, the conversation turned upon domestic matters, butter-making, cheese-making, and wine-making coming under consideration. One lady took occasion to speak highly of her host's home-made, which remark suggested the idea of tasting the last brewing. The maid was sent to the cellar to fetch some, but soon returned, apparently much scared, and out of breath: “Oh—mum—sure—'tis all gone; it is, indeed!” And sure enough it was. The ghosts had drank it. The empty cask was there, with one side eaten half-way down, and marks of sharp teeth very visible about the bung-hole. The thing was clear. The ghosts were no other than rats, who, having made the pleasant discovery of the wine-tub, and having relished its flavour, had invited their friends and neighbours to a grand all-night's carouse. The strong wine had excited their active brains, and rendered them outrageously drunk, and hence the noises which so alarmed the people of the house, and almost killed their mistress with fright.

A rat is the last creature of which people in general would think of making a pet; but though to most of us he is a pest, and nothing less, to some he has become an amusing pet. The cases we propose to give as instances, show that Mr. Rat, like many quadrupeds and bipeds in general, is capable of improvement.

There was living in London, some years ago, a man who worked hard to get a living for his numerous family as a maker of whips. He was in the habit of cutting a number of strips of leather, oiling and greasing them, and placing them in a box ready for use. These strips frequently disappeared, one by one, nobody knew how. One day, while at work in his shop, he saw a large black rat poking his head out of a hole in one corner of the room. Presently he came out and made his way straight to the box where the strips of leather were placed. In he dived, and almost immediately reappeared with one of the strips, and made his way to his hole. The man determined to catch the thief; so, having obtained a cinder-sieve, which he propped up with a stick, and baited with some cheese, he held the string in hand and awaited the issue. The rat soon made his appearance, smelling about, and was soon attracted to the cheese. Nibbling

away at the nice morsel, the sieve soon fell, and Mr. Rat was caught. The man armed himself with a heavy stick to despatch the prisoner when the sieve was lifted. To his astonishment the rat lay quite still; then, in a few moments, he quietly walked up the man's clothes and rested on the sleeve of his coat, looking up into his face as if pleading for his life. The whip-maker was disarmed, and decided not to kill the rat, but to see whether food placed for him every morning would not divert him from the leather strips. He put the rat down, therefore, and he quietly walked away to his hole. Every morning bread and butter was placed for the rat's breakfast, and with due regularity he came out and partook of it, while the strips of leather remained untouched. The creature soon became quite familiar; he would run about the shop, and even on the work-bench of his master. He would follow him to the stable, picking up the stray grains of corn that fell from the manger, taking care, however, to keep out of the way of the pony's feet. His great delight was to lie basking in the sun in the stable window. But this he did once too often. A neighbour's dog caught sight of him one day, dashed at him through the window, gave him an ugly squeeze and a disagreeable shake, and all was over. The dog walked away with ears and tail erect, but poor Mr. Rat's race was ended.

Another story, which we cite on the authority of the "Quarterly Review," is even more amusing.

The driver of a 'bus, in moving some trusses of hay in his hayloft, found a young rat coiled snugly up in the hay, but very miserable in its appearance. This baby rat was piebald, and the man was induced to take pity on the little creature and carry him home to his children. The children became fond of him; and as they had a little brother named Isaac, they called the rat Ikey. The little creature at once made himself at home, his favourite seat being inside the fender, but he would never occupy it if the hearth was not clean. One day the mistress was cleaning up the hearth, she gave Ikey a push to get out of the way. He at once jumped on to the hob, where he remained, though the fire grew hotter, until the hair on his legs and body was actually singed.

His master taught Ikey a great many tricks, in performing which he seemed to be much delighted. The man grew quite

fond of his pet, and the little creature, at the word of command, "Come along, Ikey," would get into his great-coat pocket when he went out to drive his 'bus. He used to put him into the boot of the 'bus to guard his dinner. The dinner was never touched, excepting when there was plum-pudding, which was too great a temptation for Ikey's virtue; but he always confined himself to the plums. The idle fellows that lurk about the public-houses where the 'bus horses are baited, do not always clearly distinguish between mine and thine, but if any of them attempted to appropriate the dinner of the driver, Ikey would be out of the boot in a moment, and, flying at the thieves, effectually put them to flight.

The father of the late F. T. Buckland, M.A., was for some time Fellow of Corpus College, Oxford. Returning to his rooms late one night, he found a rat running about among his books and geological specimens. He gave chase, but the rat was too quick for him. The battle was renewed several times; but, in the end, the scholar gave up the thought of study that night, and went to bed in the next room. In the morning he was astonished to find something warm lying on his chest. Carefully lifting the bedclothes, he discovered his tormentor of the previous night quietly and snugly ensconced in a fold of the blanket, and taking advantage of the warmth of his two-legged adversary. The two lay looking daggers at each other for some minutes, the one unwilling to leave his warm berth, and the other afraid to put his hand out from under the protection of the coverlid, particularly as the stranger's aspect was anything but friendly, his little sharp teeth and fierce black eyes seeming to say, "Paws off from me, if you please." At length he made a sudden jump off the bed, scuttled away into the next room, and was never seen or heard of afterwards.

Rats are commonly used, it is said, by some barbarous people as food. It is said the taste is not at all disagreeable. Some workmen at a farm-house once had an amusing treat. The story is related by a man who "catches for the Queen at Windsor Castle," for rats, like spiders, "are in Kings' palaces." He says he was out at a farm-house catching, and they put some young rabbits on the fire to broil. While they went elsewhere, some labouring men found out the cooked rabbits and ate them. The next time he went to that farm-house he put some big old rats on the

gridiron, and left them as before. The labourers came, and ate up all the rats, not knowing the difference. But this practical joke brought on a conflict, which did not end pleasantly for either party.

Rats are said to be very plentiful in Paris. During the siege of 1871, that proved an advantage. "Rats were in great demand," says the author of "Cassell's History of the War," though the quarters in which they were caught gave them a very disgusting character. Holes were made in the bed of the sewers, and filled in with "soupe de glucose," a thick and sweet liquid. The rats, attracted by this, were lured into the holes, from which they were unable to escape, and were captured by thousands. A rat, fat from the drains, cost one franc fifty centimes.

Rats are extremely prolific, and were not their enemies very numerous and destructive, they would soon overrun any house, any building, indeed any town or country, where they had once established themselves. It is said that rats will begin to have young when they are four months old, that they will breed every two months, and bring forth eight, ten, or more at a litter. Happily the males predominate over the females in the proportion of three or four to one, and so a check is put on their multiplication. This is a merciful provision, for, according to the testimony of a London rat-catcher, his little dog "Tiny," weighing less than six pounds, had destroyed two thousand, five hundred and twenty-five rats, which, he calculated, would have produced, in three years, no fewer than one thousand, six hundred and thirty-three millions, one hundred and ninety thousand living rats!

SYRINGA.

HER form soft-gowned in purest white ;
A maiden's innocent delight
Upon her sunny face ;
With sweet syringa in her hands.
And twined among her curls, she stands
A type of girlish grace.

It seems but yesterday we said,
"The child grows fast, the bonnie head
Has reached to father's arm ;
She grows apace, her fair, soft eyes
Look forth in rapturous surprise
At life's mysterious charm."

It seems but yesterday, and now
We watch upon her cheek and brow
The swift sweet blushes rise ;
The hand that holds the scented sprays
A token shows, of diamond-blaze,
That love has won our prize.

She wears syringa now, but lo !
Her orange-blossoms are a-blow,
The diamond band will guard
Full soon upon her finger white
The dearer golden symbol bright
Of wedlock's watch and ward.

Ah, child ! with those syringa sprays
Will pass thy careless, girlish days ;
For orange-blossoms bring
With closer love, and fortune fair,
Life's graver work ; and unknown care
Encompasseth the ring.

We hold thee yet, our very own,
Obedient to our look and tone,
But that fast-coming day
That brings the bridal ring and flower
Will rob us of our olden power,
Will take our child away.

Dear heart ! thou dost but choose the lot
Thy mother chose ; we murmur not ;
Thou dost but lay aside,
As once did she, a guarded life,
To wear the blessed name of wife,
In pathways yet untried.

What, tears ? Nay, let us dry them, dear,
For lo ! thy lover draws anear ;
Thou canst be his and ours ;
Ah ! keep us in thine heart a share,
And with his orange-blossoms wear
Our white syringa flowers !

HAMPTON COURT.

THERE are surely more Hampton Courts than one along Thames shore. Can it be the same pile of buildings, the same woods and gardens, that leave such different impressions according to the mood of the visitor, varying with age and temperament, and also depending upon the chance which offers one side of the shield or the other, first, to the view? Gloomy, cheerful, splendid, and mean ; a palace for monarchs, or a retreat for elderly dowagers ; haunted by memories of high historic note, or associated with recollections of crowds of holiday-keepers ; there is something about Hampton Court which seems to change with every changing light in which it is viewed.

From the river gay, with pleasure boats and barges, and presenting on every fine day the aspect of a continuous fête or water frolic, the palace, it must be said, presents rather a dowdy aspect, with its approach of barrack yard and cavalry stables, where troopers in their shirt sleeves are engaged in curry-combing and horse-brushing, and where now and then a bugle-call marks some epoch in the soldiers' monotonous round of duty. Still the military element is not out of keeping, and the sentry pacing up and down by the gateway suggests a thought of the time

when guards were set all round, and pass-words given, and the Royal dwelling was encompassed with all the precautions of a military post.

More imposing, perhaps, is the view from the bridge; and here you have the additional advantage that the bridge itself—the ugliest, perhaps, of the many ugly bridges that deface our beautiful river—is taken out of the landscape. Here the mass of buildings that form this really enormous palace—which is said to cover eight acres of ground, and to contain over a thousand rooms—with its lofty enclosing walls, its towers and gateways, and innumerable twisted chimney shafts, shows grandly among luxuriant foliage; its quiet dignity and repose contrasting sharply with the busy lock in the river below, where skiffs, barges, and house-boats are mingled pell-mell, or where sometimes a big pleasure barge fits as tightly as a cork into a bottle—a barge that conveys a whole community of pleasure-seekers to some favoured spot on the river.

Quite another aspect is presented when you reach the place from the other side. The long, shaded avenue of chestnuts in Bushey Park; the stately foliage; the shaded boles of the noble trees; the green glades visible between, with spotted deer browsing peacefully in the sunlight; while Diana's fountain closes the vista, rising from the tranquil pool, where patient disciples of Izaak Walton sit by the grassy margin and fish. Countless children dart about among the chequered shades; dozens of happy groups are picnicking under the trees; fair equestriennes canter over the turf; and cyclists whirl noiselessly past on their iron steeds. Far removed is anything that might suggest the struggles and miseries of less happy scenes. And yet, "yesterday it was," says our driver, pointing with his whip to a fisherman by the bank, "that gentleman caught something on his hook that he thought was a big fish; and he reeled up his line, seeing something floundering in the water that rolled over to the surface at last, and there was a human body with ghastly, glassy eyes." It was where the water is not deep and the bottom shelves gently, so that some poor nameless creature, that nobody missed, had ended the weary profitless struggle by seeking a quiet bed in Diana's pool.

From the gate of Bushey, where the "Greyhound" stands appropriately enough within hail of Diana, there is only the

road to cross, and you reach the Lion Gate of Hampton Court; yet that strip of road is as lively and animated in its way as the river close by. Here, with a merry blast of the horn, dashes up a four-horse coach with passengers for Weybridge or Virginia Water. Everything is classical in its appointment; its scarlet-coated guard, its coachman, with calm, ruddy face, broad-brimmed white beaver, and voluminous coat, a worthy descendant of the immortal Weller, who no doubt was well acquainted with the "King's Arms" at Hampton Court. Hardly has the coach rolled away, when another four-horse vehicle, vast and roomy, appears upon the scene. Here are whole families, united by some friendly bond, who descend in leisurely fashion upon terra-firma. A smart artillery sergeant gives a dash of colour to the group, and is the cynosure of the smartly-dressed young ladies of the party, while the boys look up to him with awe and admiration. The whole party are swallowed up in a neighbouring restaurant, and more vehicles take the place of theirs; now it is a landau, driven by some dark-faced sons of an Eastern clime, or a break full of beanfeasters, or the pony-carriage of the period driven past with many-hued skirts and sunshades displayed, or a stately landau rolls by with some grey-headed elders, or a shandyran with a load of laughter-loving gipsies. It is a continual never-ending procession, a Triumph, in fact, of ease and comfort and rational pleasure, such as may put Mantegna, in the big place yonder, into the shade.

But the Lion Gate of Hampton Court stands invitingly open, with its avenues and leafy recesses, and benches under the shade of tall trees. The gate itself is an excellent example of old ironwork, and dates from the end of the seventeenth century, when this part of the grounds was laid out in its present form. Close to the entrance is the Maze, for generations the delight of young people. Even now we may hear the voice of the keeper of the Maze as he gives directions to bewildered wanderers whose heads and shoulders may be seen above the green box hedges. This wooded enclosure is called the Wilderness, and its main avenue leads diagonally to a doorway, through which is to be seen the bright sunshine that basks upon the terraces and gardens beyond. And passing through the gate, you come to a strange-looking building that has the appearance of the cooling-

room of a brewery, with its long and open windows, but which is in reality the tennis-court.

This court is said to be the very oldest in the kingdom, all others having been framed upon its model. Henry the Eighth used it frequently, and was an adept at the game. Here, too, a famous match was played between the Duke of Norfolk and Lord Robert Dudley, Queen Elizabeth looking on and keeping the score. It was when the Queen's passion for the handsome Dudley was at its height. Lord Robert, hot and perspiring with his exertions, took the Queen's napkin from her lap, and wiped his face with the Royal napery. The Duke, jealous and indignant, struck at the favourite with his racket. The quarrel was appeased by Elizabeth's influence; but she never forgave the Duke, it is said, for his over-solicitude for her honour, and that when he afterwards came under the executioner's axe, all thoughts of mercy were barred by that unfortunate stroke in Hampton tennis-court.

Beyond the court we get a full view of the great front of the Palace, where all the great state apartments of King William the Third are to be found. The façade was designed by Christopher Wren; but he was probably hampered in his work by the formal requirements of the Dutch King. Anyhow, the result is not very happy, although there is a plethoric kind of dignity about the place that harmonises well enough with the trim and formal gardens, the avenues, the fountain, the Dutch canals.

There is one little bit of the eastern front, nearest the tennis court, with a mullioned window and round, projecting frontage, that is evidently a remnant of the Cardinal's, or, perhaps, of Harry's work; and, indeed, the rebuilding, under Sir C. Wren, was not so extensive and thorough as it appears at first sight, and was in many parts only a refronting and recasing of the old building. But, unfortunately, the only part open to the public—with the important exception of the Great Hall—is that which contains the state apartments of William the Third's time, which are interesting enough in their way, but in which we miss the picturesqueness, the romance, the air of mystery and perhaps of crime, that belong to the old palace of Wolsey and the Tudors.

And yet there is something of the charm of Sir Christopher's work in the fountain court and cloisters—cool and pleasant in

the noontide heat. It was a fountain court probably in the original palace, and one side is only masked by Wren's frontage, behind which are many of the original rooms and galleries; and there is a solid block of buildings beyond, to the north that is, with courts and openings here and there, that is pretty much of Tudor construction, although patched, and altered, and renewed, to meet the domestic requirements of many generations of tenants. Here is the mysterious, haunted gallery, connecting the old "Queen's apartments" with the Royal chapel. The gallery is haunted, it is said, by the shrieking ghost of Queen Catherine Howard.

The Queen was a fascinating, deceitful, delightful little creature, who had been sadly neglected in her youth and corrupted by debasing companionship; but full of the delight of life and shrinking sensitively from every touch of pain. Yesterday she had been the petted toy of her cruel husband, to-day she was doomed to the fearful fate that awaited Harry's discarded wives. In the horror of her position, surrounded by rough and brutal soldiers of the King's guard, she found a momentary chance of escape, and rushing through the long gallery, ran to seek her husband, who was at that moment hearing mass in the chapel, to cling to his knees, to soften with her tears that heart of adamant. The guards at their utmost speed followed the poor distracted creature. Just as she reached the King's closet, they overtook her and dragged her back, her frenzied screams resounding through the Palace. The gallery is now used as a kind of lumber-room; but still the shrieks of the agonised Queen are to be heard at times. Anyhow, in Mr. Ernest Law's interesting volume, "Hampton Court in Tudor Times," there is recent testimony to that effect.

Another spectre haunts the Palace whose "raison d'être" is not so evident. This is the ghost of Mrs. Penn, an old lady in a long grey gown and hood, and hanging sleeves. Mrs. Penn was the nurse of King Edward the Sixth, and died of small-pox, in the reign of Elizabeth, during an outbreak of that disorder in the Palace, which almost cost the life of the Queen. Mrs. Penn seems to have rested quietly enough for nearly three centuries, until, in the year 1829—when old Hampton Church was pulled down—her tomb was broken into and her dust disturbed. Soon after, mysterious noises were heard in the south-west wing of the Palace, among the

ancient rooms and corridors of the Cardinal's Palace. Search was made into the source of the curious noises, and an ancient chamber was discovered, where there was an antique spinning-wheel, and sundry objects of ancient furniture. The treadle of the wheel had worn a hollow in the oaken planks beneath, as if the wheel had been driven for all the long centuries since it was first placed there. And from the time these objects were discovered and removed, as if the woman's occupation were gone, old Mrs. Penn has been in the habit of roaming about, frightening maids and their mistresses, and once even driving a bold hussar, who mounted sentry in the gateway, almost out of his wits.

Before we leave the more recent part of the Palace, which has fewer tragic and ghostly memories, we must take a hasty glance through the state apartments, which now form a series of picture-galleries, but which still retain some of the furniture and belongings of their former Royal occupants. Here is the King's Grand Staircase, imposing enough, more or less adorned overhead with Verrio's sprawling effigies. This brings us to the Guard Chamber, whose windows overlook the private gardens with pleasant views of the Thames and the Surrey Hills, and which is hung appropriately enough with portraits of the Admirals and Generals of old times, and with battle-pieces of an ancient character. Then follows a vista of stately rooms, presence-chambers, and audience-chambers, hung with pictures interesting both historically and artistically. Altogether, on the walls of the whole series of rooms, are hung over a thousand pictures, including many unique portraits of historic characters, with examples of the great Italians, Giorgione, Tintoretto, Titian, of the Spanish School also, and with the Flemish and English masters strongly represented.

Where the King's rooms end, the Queen's rooms begin, and the whole enables one to realise the stately existence of the monarchs of the period, who lived a good deal in public, and whose going to bed, and getting up in the morning, were in the nature of solemn functions. The Queen's drawing-room looks over the formal gardens and the Home Park with its long avenues of limes, which Charles the Second is said to have planted. There were waters and fountains in his time; and the general arrangement of the grounds is rather after the pattern of Versailles

than of the Dutch type, with which it is generally associated. But William the Third, who lived more at Hampton Court than at any of the other Royal Palaces, added canals and other adornments. It was while William was inspecting some of the works being carried on in the Park, that his favourite pony stumbled over a mole-hill and gave the King the fall from the effects of which he died.

Queen Anne also favoured Hampton Court, and her veritable state-bed still appears in the Queen's bedroom, with hangings of Spitalfields silk. With the Queen's Staircase the more ancient part of the Palace was once connected. Of Catherine Howard's ghost we have already heard. But there is another gallery, the Silverstick Gallery, which is haunted by the figure of another of Henry's Queens. On the anniversary of the birthnight of Edward the Sixth, the spectre of Jane Seymour, who died soon after giving birth to the Prince, is seen to ascend the staircase and make its way towards the gallery in question. She is clad in white, flowing garments, and carries a lighted lamp in her hand; pale and faint as if just rescued from the grave, and with an air of painful solicitude.

The most interesting part of the Palace, perhaps, is the fine clock court communicating with the fountain court, and which outwardly remains much as the great Cardinal left it, except that one of the sides has been refronted in Italian taste by Sir Christopher Wren. This court is now adorned by the curious astronomical clock over the gateway, whose quaint dial, with figures of the earth, the moon, and the sun, and surrounded with the signs of the zodiac, dates from the sixteenth century, and is one of the oldest in the kingdom. About the clock, too, there is a legend. It is said that the clock stopped on the night of the second of March, 1619, when Ann of Denmark, the Queen of James the First, died, and that the death of any important resident in the Palace always stops the clock. The rooms about the central gateway, with their fine oriel windows and the adjoining wings, were at one time, it is supposed, occupied by the Cardinal himself, and his more distinguished guests. And here, if anywhere, the haunting presence of the great churchman should be manifested. But no one is recorded to have met with that stately figure in its scarlet robes.

Still the memory of the Cardinal is

preserved in a very creepy, gruesome manner. You shall be an inmate of one of the old rooms of the Palace, and peacefully sleeping in your bed, when in the dead of night you awake with a feeling of awe and fear. There is something slowly creeping along the walls; and a light reveals the presence of an enormous spider, with red, dusky body and great hairy legs, measuring as much as five or six inches across. It is the Cardinal spider, and tradition associates it with Wolsey himself, as though he peopled the place with his familiars, which reveal themselves now and then in this awful fashion.

From the clock court to the river gateway all the buildings now belong to the Cardinal's Palace. The clock gate leads into another court, the outer or base-court of the original Palace; a quadrangle, surrounded by buildings of collegiate character. Here were the lodgings of the Cardinal's numerous guests, each being a double lodging with inner and outer chamber, and opening upon a common corridor which ran along the whole length of the building. A noble house was kept by Wolsey, and every night two hundred and four-score beds were made up, the furniture of most being silk, and all for the entertainment of strangers, while each room had its own service, and its inmates were supplied with manchetts of bread, and a goodly supply of wine to supplement the regular meals which were served in the Great Hall.

The Great Hall, as it at present exists on the west side of the clock court, seems to have been left unfinished by the Cardinal, and to have been completed and adorned by his successor in title, King Henry the Eighth. It is a noble hall, with a fine hammer-beam timber roof, richly decorated with pendants and elaborate carvings. The walls are hung with tapestry of the best Flemish make, setting forth the story of Abraham in mediæval fashion, and due to the looms of that town of Arras, which gave its name to such hangings. The adjoining Presence Chamber is hung with tapestry still more ancient, and darkened with age; its subject, the Triumphs of Petrarch, is almost unrecognisable in the dim light. And here is a fine oaken mantelpiece from Hampton Wick, with the Cardinal's profile carved in medallion.

A wonderful builder was the Cardinal, paying with Royal hand, but exacting the best of workmanship and materials from all concerned. Before his time the history of Hampton Court presented no remark-

able features. The Conqueror granted the Manor to one De Saint Valery, and the descendants of the latter alienated it to the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem. The Knights of Saint John had at one time a preceptory here; and the Manor House and its adjoining curtilage bore the title of Hampton Court, long before the Cardinal cast eyes upon it. Wolsey was recommended to the place by the reputation it enjoyed for healthiness and purity of air, and he obtained a lease of the whole Manor from the Order for a rental of some fifty pounds a year; the Prior and convent covenanting to supply four loads of wood and timber yearly to repair Hampton Weir from their Manor of Saint John's Wood. The Cardinal, on acquiring the site, set to work with his customary energy; he enclosed the whole demesne with a brick wall, some part of which still remains along the Kingston Road and elsewhere; he dug a moat about the site, he drained it perfectly with great brick drains, and brought an abundant supply of pure water from Coombe Hill in Surrey, conveyed in pipes beneath the bed of the river. In 1516 the building was so far completed that Wolsey entertained the King and Queen at dinner in his new house. And from that time forward King Henry was constantly in the habit of visiting his Chancellor, sometimes in disguise, with mockings, and mummery, and all kinds of pranks. In 1525, when the King's jealousy of his great Chancellor began to appear, Wolsey gave the whole to the King, Manor, Palace, furniture, hangings, plate—as magnificent a gift as ever a Monarch received. But the Cardinal seems still to have used the place constantly as a residence till his final downfall, when he was ordered to confine himself to his neighbouring seat at Esher.

The news of the Cardinal's death found the King shooting at the butts in the park, and from that moment Henry began to build and alter and remodel the place after his own heart. The King had kept his honeymoon with Ann Boleyn at Hampton Court, and still in the fervour of his passion, he adorned every vacant place with her badge, the falcon, combined with his own, the portcullis, or the Tudor rose. Gilded vanes and leaden finials showed everywhere the initials of King and Queen twined lovingly together. Then there were jousts and tournaments in the tilt-yard, which Henry had made, where the horses of the hussars are now stabled,

witnessed by the Queen and the beauties of the Court

Whose bright eyes
Rain influence and judge the prize.

It was in Hampton Court, in one of the old chambers, that Ann Boleyn surprised the King in amorous dalliance with her attendant, Jane Seymour. Presently from Richmond Hill, not far distant, the King was anxiously listening for the shot from the Tower that should announce the death of Ann, and leave him free to wed the new love. And if it be as a punishment that the dead are compelled to revisit at times these glimpses of the moon, then there is no doubt that Jane Seymour's ghost may be fully accounted for.

Considerable trouble and expense were caused by the necessity of knocking out the memorials of Ann and inserting those of Jane in the embellishments of the Palace. But a few of the former were overlooked, or permitted to remain. The fan vaulting of the clock gateway, for instance, bears her badge, the falcon. King Harry's matrimonial achievements are also emblazoned in the stained windows of the Great Hall, and although most of the glass is modern, yet the heraldic devices, and the arms and cognizances of Harry's brides, have been carefully and accurately reproduced.

As we stand in the old courtyard associated with so many memories, alike joyous and sinister, a door is suddenly flung open, and a youth in white flannels precipitates himself across the area. Quick as thought, a girl appears in hot pursuit, a charming youthful figure in white, that pauses for a moment on the threshold, turns back with a toss of the head, seeing that the chase has escaped, and vanishes in the darkened interior. Thus appeared the fair Geraldine to the gallant Surrey in the dead long ago, when the sun shone as brightly as now.

Hampton me taught to wish her first for mine.

After Henry's death, Philip and Mary spent their leaden honeymoon at Hampton Court, and Elizabeth in her time visited the place occasionally. James the First's Queen died here, we are told; the quaint old clock yonder knows something about that matter. Charles the First loved the place and brought here some of his artistic treasures; and here he spent some gloomy weeks in captivity. Cromwell, too, lived much at Hampton Court; but there are few reminiscences of him, traditional or

otherwise. But Charles the Second and the beauties of his Court were often here, and those who wish to people the Court with their ideal images, have only to visit the King's bedchamber, when all their voluptuous charms are depicted in milk and honey by Sir Peter Lely.

After the beauties of Charles the Second's graceful, if dissolute period, succeeded the stiff Dutch madames of the reign of William and Mary. Mary's favourite walk we are told was under the wall of the Palace near the river, where she would stalk up and down at a great pace, followed by her ladies in waiting. The people of the neighbourhood who watched the procession from a respectful distance, named the place Frow Walk, and this name, corrupted into Frog's Walk, still remains as a memory of those distant days.

The purlieus of the Court are as orderly as the interior. Everybody goes to see the private gardens and the great vine which dates from 1769, and the fruit of which is reserved strictly for the Royal table. There are the orange-trees, too, which date from the early Georges. George the Second was the last reigning monarch who occupied the Court as a residence, and from this time, for some reason or other, the Palace has been deserted altogether by Royalty. But the pond-garden carries one back to the early days of the Palace; and the stables by the green were built in the reign of Elizabeth.

In Elizabeth's time we are told the walls about the Palace were all covered with rosemary. Our flowers and creepers at the present day are incomparably more showy and luxuriant; but we shall enjoy the beauties of Hampton Court all the more if we carry with us the mystic sprig of rosemary; the remembrance, that is, however vague and shadowy, of the scenes that have passed within its historic walls.

LESLIE DERRANT.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE passes so quickly and the end comes so soon, that, if there was not eternity to fall back upon, existence would hardly be worth having. This is true, no doubt; but as we certainly have eternity before us, it is clearly a truth of no importance. Besides, when we are brought into the world we cannot say, "I will live," or "I will die;" life is forced

upon us, and we must bear it as we best can. To some it is a joy to be thankful for, to others a burden to be endured. For my own part, I admit I like to live; it suits me, and I feel a dread of the time when the fashion of life I understand must pass into another more beautiful, but still unknown and strange.

I enjoy living. I make complaint only of the swiftness of time, it flies too fast. It is but morning, and lo! it is night, and I must enter the kingdom of sleep. I wonder do other people's days vanish as do mine?

Years ago, I once found the days long enough; but I was young then (by comparison only with what I am now), and my wits were more nimble. At that time I became engaged, ostensibly, as governess to Leslie Derrant, really as mentor, safe confidante, and judicious friend.

I liked Hurst Lodge at once. It was a substantial red-brick house, with wide mullioned windows, basement well above ground, and a stately flight of broad steps, shaped in the segment of a circle, ascending to the hall door.

As I drove through the park that sunny afternoon, the rich warm glow of its walls and the glittering of its windows seemed to give me a kindly welcome, and I thought that people who lived in such a bright and beautiful home could not be sad or sorry for long together.

A dainty little lady met me in the hall, and graciously wished that my stay in the old house might be happy. She was small of stature and slight, as upright as a poplar, of dark complexion. Kind brown eyes looked at me with the frank friendliness of a child, her eyebrows were brown, but her hair was a beautiful soft white. To call it snow or silver would be to libel its exquisite tint.

"Leslie and my husband are not here to welcome you," she said. "I contrived their absence because I wanted to have a little chat with you alone. It was so good of you to come. My cousin told me if any one could manage our dear Leslie, it would be you."

"I was glad to come," I replied; "I had let my servants with my house, and I was contemplating a stay in the Black Forest and then a year's travel. This will be a greater change for me, and I always had a longing to try how I should feel earning my own living; but, you know, I really must be simply the governess to everybody here. Mr. Wyatt and his

niece, I hope, believe that I have never been anything but a governess since my husband died."

"I have never told them otherwise; but will you not have some refreshment?"

"I had a cup of tea at the Junction, thanks."

"Leslie has not been with us much more than a year. She is the only child of Mr. Wyatt's only sister, and when her parents died it seemed fitting that she should come to us. But we are a very quiet couple, and, being childless, do not well understand girls. We found that Leslie was dull, and when a friend offered to take her to London with her daughters last season, we let her go gladly. I did beg my friend to be very careful of her, though I felt a little ashamed of myself for doing so; but a young girl of that age is a great charge."

"Yes," I assented, and she went on with her tale.

"Leslie wrote and told us how she was enjoying herself, and how kind people were to her. My husband and I talked over her gay doings, and thought that perhaps some one would love her, for she is very sweet, and we decided that we would not care about his position or wealth if he were really a good man, for Leslie has enough for both. We never said anything about her fortune, but I find it was known in London. Well, we never heard of any lover. Leslie came home, all joy and smiles, and her uncle joked her about a sweetheart. Then she blushed and said with a radiant face, 'He is coming, and if you do not declare him to be Prince Charming, I shall not believe you to be my own dear old uncle;' and she ruffled up his hair, as she used to be fond of doing, and kissed him.

"'He must be very charming indeed, if he is to get you.'

"'He is,' she answered; then lifting her little head and looking quite stately she said, 'We are engaged, and he is coming down directly to ask your consent and approval.'

"'It might have been asked sooner,' my husband said gruffly.

"'He had to ask me first, and then a week or two did not seem to matter, so he waited till I came home. Don't be vexed, uncle dear.'

"No one could be vexed with her, so he smiled and said, 'I am a bit disappointed that you should have got engaged without my consent.'

" 'I knew you would give it me ; you always do everything to make me happy ; besides, he told me that in such a solemn thing as marriage a girl must follow the dictates of her own heart only.'

"I felt a little frightened at these words. They seemed almost to imply opposition from us. And, as you know, my fear came true. My husband made enquiries about him at once, and when he came down was obliged to declare that he could not countenance an engagement. Leslie was miserable at first, but is more cheerful now, and hopes to bring us round ; if not, she will abandon us for him. He is a gambler and a flirt, holds all women lightly, and it is doubtful if he really loves Leslie. We have told her this, but she thinks we speak with prejudice ; if you can make her understand it, we will bless you."

"I will not see a girl sacrificed if I can help it. I will do my very best."

I was just ready to come down to dinner when there was a tap at my door, and Leslie came in.

"I am very glad to know you, Mrs. Markham," she said in a low, clear voice that charmed me at once ; "it is very kind of you to come and read with me. I hope we shall be great friends. I am come, now, to show you the way to the dining-room."

We went down the broad stairway side by side, so I could not examine my companion critically. In the dining-room I was introduced to Mr. Wyatt, a small, round, homely little man, with rosy face and rosy crown, a fringe of grizzled hair falling to his shirt-collar. He welcomed me kindly, wished me joy of my pupil, and added jocosely, "She is an obstinate little puss."

"Oh ! pray don't prejudice Mrs. Markham against me, uncle."

There was a little ring of pain in her voice, so I smiled at her, to assure her he could not do that, and then I saw how very lovely she was. A complexion of the most delicate fairness ; a face rather long, but too wide at the brows to be called oval ; a well-formed nose ; and a mouth that seemed made for smiling, the lips arched with such readiness and beauty ; dark grey eyes that smiled with the mouth, and yet had a touch of sadness in them ; brown hair that was swept from her face in a soft, fluffy cloud ; a round, white, slender throat ; a slight, graceful

figure ; and over all an indefinable expression of youth, health, and refinement ; and there is Leslie Derrant as I saw her that first evening.

My heart went out to her at once, and I think she liked me a little from the very beginning of our intercourse.

We read together, especially in Italian. We were both fond of drawing, and made sketches of old trees and all the prettiest bits of scenery in the park. We rode, sometimes accompanied by Wyatt and a fine young fellow, Philip Harrington, a neighbour, who I soon saw would have been glad to be more than a friend to Leslie, sometimes with only a groom ; and we trudged along the pretty lanes, or over the breezy down, making friends with children and dogs wherever we found them. We were always busy, and Leslie was mostly cheerful.

A month had passed and Leslie had not yet confided to me her trouble. "You have done the girl a world of good," Mr. Wyatt said with beaming face. "I cannot feel grateful enough to you for coming," whispered Mrs. Wyatt ; but I was not content.

When Mr. Wyatt refused Charles Pennell's suit, and begged Leslie to give him up, he had not forbidden her to receive letters from him—he had feared such prohibition might lead to deceit. And once a week a letter came that brought a blush of pleasure to the girl's face. She always put all letters straight into her pocket, and often went into the garden to read them. One morning I came upon her in a little dell in the park, with one in her hand. There was such dejection in her attitude, that I cried involuntarily :

"Leslie, dear, what is it ?"

She raised her head, and the eyes heavy with tears, and the little quivering mouth, were all my answer.

"You must tell me what grieves you so," I said, dragging the little head down on my shoulder. And then she told me the story of her love, and of her great hope that in time her uncle and aunt must see Charles as she did.

"I can wait," she said, "wait for years, if necessary ; but men are of more irritable nature, and he finds waiting very hard ; he declares," and she touched his letter, "that this continued separation is wearing him out ; that he must see me, must know the limit to this waiting. If I will not tell him, he shall think that I, too, am growing to believe him too humble, too poor for

me. I think him too humble, too poor! Oh! he is brave, he is honourable, Mrs. Markham, and if I only had a brother who could go about and find out all his good deeds, the errors that have come to my uncle's knowledge would be as nothing."

"I wish some one could. Your uncle would be glad to find his judgement mistaken."

"Cannot you help me; you have friends in society?"

Her earnest belief in the man, her patience in her sorrow, touched me deeply. I longed to make her happy.

"I will do what I can," I said, but a fear that her uncle's objection was probably wholly just made me add: "But if the answers to my enquiries are not quite favourable, you will hear them all the same?"

"Certainly, I am not afraid."

Her uncle was coming towards us, so we were silent.

After luncheon I watched Leslie ride away, accompanied by her uncle and Mr. Harrington, and I wondered at the contrariness of fate in preventing a union between them.

"If it might have been, it would have made us so happy," said Mrs. Wyatt, who had also been watching the departure.

"Is it possible that there has been malicious exaggeration in the reports you have received about Mr. Pennell?" I asked.

"I fear not."

"I love Leslie as if she were my own child," I said, "and I wish you to let me act in her interest without letting you know what I do in the result. It will give me more influence with her, and if anything comes out against her lover, she will feel it less if unknown to you."

"You are right. Do as you will. In all things you have my fullest confidence. I only wish to see Leslie's future happiness secured. Mr. Pennell's name is never mentioned between us. The last time I spoke of him she drew away from me, and turned proud and cold. Oh! the pity of it."

I felt the pity of it keenly as I turned from the dear, sad old face to begin my independent investigation.

As Leslie passed to her room to take off her habit she looked in at me. A pile of letters which I had written attracted her attention at once, and she said, "Thank you, thank you so much. I have such great hopes that something very good will come of them." The glad smile on her beautiful face, and the grateful look in her eyes, lingered long in my memory.

CHAPTER II.

MANY days passed before my first answer came. It was from the Honourable Mrs. Chetwynd, and this was the little bit I read to Leslie: "The girls and I have been staying at Rosebank. Mr. Pennell was there, making himself very agreeable with everybody. He is a good shot, good dancer, good tennis player, admirable at charades and private theatricals; altogether a great acquisition at a country house. We found him charming."

"Of course," said Leslie, "everybody does that really knows him," and that little commendation of her love made her bright and merry for several days.

I was rather afraid of the effect of the next letter. It was:

"I fear there is not much to be said in praise of Mr. Pennell. He is too fond of cards, and B. and S. My husband says he lost rather heavily a few weeks ago, and is a little reckless in all things."

I did not venture to look at Leslie after reading this, and was surprised when she said quietly:

"Just what he says of himself, as to cards and fondness of excitement, but all that will be changed when he has a home of his own, and I think it better to lose your own money than win other people's, don't you?"

"I have a great dread of play. I have seen families ruined by it," I replied.

The next I let her read herself. It said:

"We were staying at Mount Erroll about a fortnight ago. Mr. Pennell was there, charming as usual, and paying so much attention to Mattie Selwyn that I should think he meant something, only he must marry money. Poor girl, I am quite sorry for her, she did not seem to imagine that he could be only amusing himself."

I heard a little sigh, then Leslie handed me back the letter without remark.

Mr. Pennell's letter to Leslie that week was a little behind time, and was short and peremptory, as I gathered from what she told me of its contents. He said she was cruel to him, and that he must know when the end of this waiting was to be, for he was tired of it.

I implored her to settle nothing.

"I will tell him that waiting is hard for me also," she answered.

A letter that I had about this time took

me to London, where I did a stroke of business that I hoped would be very beneficial to all at Hurst Lodge.

The day after my return, Leslie and I were sitting alone in our reading-room. I laid some letters wide-open one upon the other, and passed them to her.

"Read them, dear, please."

She read one through, looking rather mystified. When she came to the end, she said, "Charley"—that was all the signature—and blushed crimson.

"Read one or two more," I urged.

"They are love-letters," she said, as if this were full reason for her not doing so.

"Never mind; read on. Do you not know who wrote them?"

"No; suspicion is not knowledge."

"I do. Look."

I found a page as the letters lay on the table beside her, on which there was the name, "Charles Pennell."

"I have no right to complain that I was not his first love," she said sadly, and pushed the letters from her.

Vexed at the failure of my scheme, I threw the letters into the fender, and lighted a vesta to burn them.

"Does she not want them?" she asked.

"No; they are mine. I bought them."

"And you wonder that he ceased to love a girl who could sell his letters?"

Her indignation was beautiful.

"He could not foresee that she would do that. He treated her heartlessly, and she has grown reckless, and is leaving England to-day."

Leslie answered nothing. I felt quite crestfallen, and was silent, too. Presently she came to me, put her arm on my shoulder, and said:

"You are a dear, good creature, but so misled—so mistaken. Some day I know you will own yourself wrong, and then I shall not know how to love you enough."

I had other letters telling of Mr. Pennell's debts, improvidence, and so on, which Leslie read because of her promise to do so; and I began to think that they were producing an effect, because she began to look pale and anxious.

But one day when we were near a gate in the park, she said to me:

"Charles proposes to wait outside with two horses, that I may slip out in the gloaming and ride away with him."

"Oh, Leslie, you will not," I cried.

"Never. I will go to my wedding openly. But his constant urgency wears

me out. I must promise something. He will be content if I say I will marry him when I come of age."

"That is soon, in a few weeks. Oh, wait, my dear girl, wait a little longer!"

"He wants me," she said simply; "indeed I think he really needs me, he is poor and I am rich; if he is to be my husband, is it not right that I should do all I can to help him?"

"He is working upon your feelings, he knows how good you are. I know the world, and, believe me, a few weeks' more delay cannot injure him; it is impossible. Promise him that you will settle everything the day you come of age."

"I will, and I hope he will be content."

How shall I save you, my poor darling? I thought. He will win you as much through your generosity as your love. Already he trades with his sins for your compassion; he fears he cannot keep quite straight without your sweet support. I know the cant of such persuasion. And when a woman loves a rake, she always believes herself his sole chance of salvation, yet never compasses aught but her own ruin. Has he changed his tactics, because his love is so played out that he cannot even make it look grand on paper? I gasped with delight as this idea shot through my mind, it opened another possibility of rescue for my darling. Again and again I declined to ride because of the pressure of my correspondence. I would not trespass on the evenings; Leslie and I were scrupulous in devoting them to the old couple, who were the kindest of hosts and guardians, and showed nothing of the anxiety and trouble that I knew were pressing heavily upon them.

Soon my writing ceased, and my attitude was that of the conspirator, standing, fuse in hand, ready at a given signal to fire the train and explode the mine I had so carefully prepared. I waited and waited for the signal, the days passed wearily; it was then I learned that Time is sometimes leaden-footed, and is forced to fold his wings and creep along.

At last my signal came. I went to Mrs. Wyatt and said: "I want to take holiday for a couple of days to visit a friend in Norfolk, and I should like to take Leslie with me."

"By all means, dear friend; the change will do you good. I have thought you looking harassed lately." The dear, kind old face looked quite pleased at the idea of pleasure for me.

I went to Leslie and said: "I have to visit an old school-fellow, just for a day or so. It is a long way, and I cannot bear travelling alone. I wish you would come with me, it would be doing me a great favour."

"I will come, of course. You know I would do anything for you—in reason." The beautiful eyes had a little reproach in them as she said the last words.

When we were seated in the train, Leslie told me she meant to enjoy herself thoroughly, and was resolved to think of nothing that could trouble her. And throughout our long journey she was interested in everything; found humour in little incidents that seemed to me trivial; laughed merrily, and was altogether so gay and joyous, that more than once the feeling came over me that I must be travelling in a dream, and should soon wake and find myself alone in my room at Hurat Lodge.

We drove about all the next morning, visiting the Town Hall, several churches, one not very ancient ruin, and, best of all, the market, a picturesque old place, with heaps of flowers, and pretty cone-made baskets, holding ferns, that took Leslie's fancy greatly. She bought one for her aunt. We wanted to make the most of one day, so lunched at a little roadside inn, and then continued our drive, and were home about five to an early dinner, after which we walked in the garden.

My friend's residence was a semi-detached villa, so the garden was much wider than the house. And on this extra width was a lawn of softest turf; the wall was rather low, but above it was green lattice-work, covered with creepers, and beyond, a corresponding grass-plot for the next house.

We all walked close to the creeper-covered wall, for the sake of the fragrance of the flowers; and when my friend was called away, Leslie and I continued to pace up and down. The girl was still very cheerful, and kept me amused by her bright little speeches; but all the time I was straining my ears to catch the sound of voices on the other side the wall.

"If we could bottle up some of this air, it might prove a new elixir, for surely it has made me grow younger. I feel like a giddy school-girl to-day."

The change in tone of the last few words told me that Leslie had recognised the voice that I only heard.

It said in clear penetrating utterance:

"I could not keep away longer; if you

had not consented to see me I must have come without."

"What is the good?" that was all I could hear; the girl's voice sank so low. Leslie walked on unconsciously, and I with her, and step for step we kept pace with the speakers on the other side of the wall.

"It is true," he replied. "I must not bring you to my poor estate—but you love me, Maud, and I love you. We can, at least, be friends a little longer."

"Will that make parting easier? No, Charles, let us say good-bye to-night."

"I cannot. I will never say it. I will lose all things sooner than lose you—Maud, my love, my darling!" There was a kiss.

Leslie gripped my arm. "He never loved me so well," she said hoarsely, as she turned towards the house.

We went into a room with windows looking upon the garden. Leslie sat away from them. She managed to take a cup of tea and say a few words about to-morrow's journey with fair composure. She begged to be excused retiring so early, as her head ached. I followed her to her room. She was taking off her dress with trembling eagerness. She let me help her. "Oh, do not speak of him, I cannot bear it," she said, in a voice of agony. I kissed her for answer. She felt a tear upon her cheek. "Do not grieve for me," she said. "I have no tears. I shall be quite myself to-morrow."

I could not sleep for remembrance of the face I had left on the pillow; it was so beautiful and terrible in its depth of despair. What would the old people say when they saw it, they, who loved her so dearly—that the woman they trusted her with had broken her heart? I began to be afraid of what I had done.

The next morning Leslie spoke to me without constraint, and as I glanced at her there was a worn, little smile on her face that seemed to say, "See, I am getting over it," and the look that was so awful to me was gone. Still there was such utter sadness under her pathetic attempt at cheerfulness, that my friend could not help crying as she wished her good-bye, and excused her emotion by Leslie's resemblance to a school friend now in India.

Very dull was our journey home. Leslie's far-away, unchanging gaze as she looked at the scenes that had so charmed her two days before, went to my heart. The ferns in the cone-basket were our only distraction, and I rejoiced that the delicate fronds

required such constant care and attention to preserve them from damage. Mrs. Wyatt met us, bright and hopeful as we parted. I read her disappointment as she looked at Leslie, though she never spoke of it.

The days went on in their old tranquil fashion. I was always ready to ride, for I had given up letter-writing. Mr. Harrington was with us frequently, and I liked his chivalrous, almost reverent admiration for Leslie. I do not think she was conscious of it; but she had some regard for him as her uncle's great friend, and often talked with him pleasantly.

She would not hear of any festivities on her coming of age, not even a treat to the school-children. She was very calm, and I knew she had decided upon her course in life; but her settled sadness assured me that she did not expect to be happy.

When her birthday dawned, my first thought was, will she marry him in spite of all? My sweet old lady's hand shook when she took her cup at breakfast. Mr. Wyatt's pink forehead was pale with apprehension. We were all in dread of what we might have to hear. Leslie Derrant had now absolute power to dispose of herself and her fortune as she pleased.

There were many gifts for her, the fairest from Mr. Harrington, a beautiful china basket full of flowers. She only looked at those of her uncle and aunt. After giving them warm thanks, she still lingered near them with white, resolute face. We all felt she was gathering strength to speak her decision. I could hear my own heart beat. This tense expectancy was more than the old man could bear. He pushed back his chair; the sound roused her.

"Uncle," she cried, "I am going to do as you wish, and you must let me grow old under your roof."

"My darling, God bless you!" He caught her in his arms. Her head rested upon his shoulder. I looked into her face, and I knew that if there is a grief that kills, such grief was hers.

We clustered round her; she gave one hand to her aunt, the other to me. She wished to show us that the words she had spoken were to us as well as to her uncle, to include us in her loving, grateful thanks.

We spoke incoherent words, but she understood us. We were so rejoiced, yet so sorrowful.

Later, she took me to her room and showed me a copy of a letter she had sent to Charles Pennell.

She told him quietly and firmly that she could not marry without her uncle's consent, that she had no hope of obtaining it, and after much thought had decided that they must part. She regretted that she had come as a disturbing influence in his life, trusted that he would soon forget her, the duration of their friendship having been so short, and that he would be happy himself and give much happiness to others.

"It is a beautiful letter," I said. "But if he writes or comes?"

"I will not read his letters. I will not see him," she cried passionately.

Mr. Pennell did write. I returned his letter unopened. Leslie was always pale and sad. She tried hard to keep up an interest in people and things, but the effort was beyond her strength. Her attempts at cheerfulness were most touching; her health was failing; she clung to me, and when I proposed to take her abroad, consented at once. Her uncle and aunt were glad that she should go with me. She made her will, and said what a pity it was a girl should have so much to leave. She told no one how she had disposed of her property. Her uncle and Mr. Harrington accompanied us to the vessel. She said something very kind and gentle to the latter at parting; she had learned to understand his love, and to know something of the loss she had made through the wilfulness of her own heart.

We passed the winter in the South, moving from one beautiful place to another in the hope of finding interest or amusement, but she drooped always.

"I cannot uproot my love," she said to me. "It will not die until I do."

And I knew that its death would come soon. I sent for her uncle and aunt, and they came and stayed with us until the end. We buried her in a little foreign cemetery that she had fancied, and Philip Harrington was one of the mourners, and strewed sweet flowers from his home upon her grave.

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